



Assessment Division

# TIDBITS

## Tips and Helpful Links

### New Horizons

For teachers and parents of students with significant learning challenges, the prospect of college and career readiness may seem improbable. Although the law requires transition plans to be underway by the time the student turns 16, many LEAs begin the process sooner. This month's newsletter highlights some of the initiatives underway in various parts of the country offering options for life after high school. Many community colleges and some four year institutions are now offering opportunities for



students with intellectual disabilities to experience aspects of college life. Here students with disabilities are learning the power of uniting in order to have their needs met. Options for career choices are expanding as well with tailored training programs that offer coaching on the job. New legislation guarantees SWD opportunities to

participate in school sports activities while revolutionary technological advances are making communication and learning both fun and accessible. In an era of cutbacks, these positive trends are reasons to celebrate and maintain the momentum toward practices establishing high expectations for these students both academically and socially.

What does College and Career Ready mean for students with autism or intellectual disabilities? It may include attendance at one of the nationwide community colleges that offer job and career training specifically designed for this population. These schools are part of the Community College Consortium on Autism and Intellectual Disabilities (CCCAID) who develop corporate partnerships, designing programs that satisfy all the workplace demands graduates will encounter. One such partnership is with a food service company where curriculum is designed to provide a bona-fide path to jobs in the hospitality industry, culminating in a national certification for graduates. In addition to job training, students with disabilities will learn skills for independent living. It's a win/win – employers will get trained workers specific to the industry while graduating students will be more independent and marketable in the workforce.

For more information: <http://www.cccaid.org/>

“Control/Click” to access all links

## The Power of Organization

Students with disabilities on college campuses see the benefits of uniting to have their voices heard.



At the University of North Carolina students with a variety of disabilities have formed a group called Advocates for Carolina in an effort to bring attention to inequities they're experiencing. The group deals with accessibility issues, the need for faculty training to increase awareness of special needs and elements of Universal Design, as well as issues of respect and equal treatment. They foresee years of advocacy work as more and more students with special needs arrive on college campuses.

[http://uncstudentorgs.collegiatelink.net/organization/Advocates\\_for\\_Carolina](http://uncstudentorgs.collegiatelink.net/organization/Advocates_for_Carolina)

### UA Celebrates Its First Group of Graduates

Five students enrolled in Project Focus at the University of Arizona will graduate this spring. The program is a collaborative venture between the university and TUSD to provide students with ID the opportunity to make their college dreams a reality. To read more, click [here](#)

## The Promise of Technology



Advancing technologies are making learning more personalized and accessible for students with disabilities. Students who may not have considered college are now offered options that they can work with – Skype, phone, e-mail, and other ways of connecting at different levels help ensure their success.

While educational plans in the past have focused on supports delivered by teachers, coaches, and therapists, the supports offered by technology are portable, less costly, and focused on growth and achievement as opposed to maintenance and safety. Tablets are opening doors to communication and engagement and their use is strongly supported in research.

Many autistic students will more readily engage with their peers through technology, be it a video game or a SMART Board activity at school. Texting and Facebook interactions can be more comfortable options for teens with autism. Teachers can use the devices for data collection to conduct behavior analysis and guide instruction. Online classrooms afford options such as content presented in multiple formats to match

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individual learning needs. Consistency in formatting is important for some students with autism who have difficulties with changing systems and procedures as they switch classes. The Sage Colleges are offering a fully online bachelor's program that takes advantage of technology to design programs for students with special needs. These personalized avenues utilizing technology promise to eliminate barriers in the pursuit of college and career for all students.

<http://www.sage.edu/search/index.php?q=special+needs+students>

### Targeted Skills Training

As one of the largest transition programs in the state, Orange County in Florida has eight sites where public school students with ID or autism who have earned special education diplomas can learn job skills under the direction of a teacher and job coaches. The program includes before work classes that teach interviewing skills as well as those needed for independent living. From there the students go on-site for job training in places like hospitals, hotels, plant nurseries, the University of Central Florida, and Goodwill.

Plans for next year expand the opportunities to work at a theme park, local businesses, and a print shop. District officials are tracking the program's success in securing post-training employment and report encouraging results. Employers are very satisfied with the skills students demonstrate, and parents are thrilled that their child has opportunities for socialization while making a contribution to their community.

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/features/education/os-special-education-transition-jobs-20130212,0,4112571.story>



### Life Skills

A new complex called LifeTown is under development in Livingston, N.J. that's designed to provide life skill experiences for students with autism and other special needs. It's the third of its



kind in the nation and will offer a shoppable and walkable Life Village where students can interact in simulated settings such as a medical clinic, a theater, a bank, a library, and stores as well as practice with traffic lights, fire alarms, and natural events such as thunderstorms.

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An additional aspect of their experience will be fostering the development of inclusion outside the classroom. The project has recruited 800 teenage volunteers to pair up with special needs students, providing opportunities for social interaction within the setting. Facilities such as this offer special needs students a safe, non-judgmental setting where they can develop the independence skills they'll need to negotiate a variety of everyday life experiences. For more information, click [Special Needs Complex](#) or take a virtual tour:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCGNPHTnqjk>

## Employment: Finding the Right Fit



New research priorities have emerged from the U.S. Department of Education's special education center. Among the one in five Americans who have a disability, statistics reflect higher unemployment and lower college-going rates among students with physical and intellectual disabilities, so the center intends to focus efforts on helping students with disabilities transition as well as find employment.

The call for new research includes areas of employment for physically disabled, health and function for those with ID, and community living and participation for those with physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities. One contributing factor to poor post-school outcomes may be the lack of coordination among federal programs that serve this population, making it difficult to receive help. In addition there was little evidence of program effectiveness in helping those with disabilities go on to college and careers. For more information about this research, contact: <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/02/12/2013-03203/proposed-priorities-national-institute-on-disability-and-rehabilitation-research-rehabilitation>

Successful employment for disabled individuals comes down to finding the right fit. Evaluating the candidate's strengths and interests, then aligning them with a job description that features both, is a winning formula. In combination with his strengths and interests, safety and communication skills were considered when finding the right position for Nathan, a young man with severe autism. With the support of a job coach, Nathan works 20 to 30 hours a week in the kitchen of the Hilton in Austin. For the past 6 years he has loved his job and has won the honor of employee of the year from the Austin Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities. To read more about Nathan's experience, visit:

<http://www.statesman.com/news/news/man-shows-how-people-with-disabilities-can-thrive/-nWDkW>

**SAVE THE DATE!**

**ASSESSMENT SUMMIT @ 2 LOCATIONS: JUNE 7<sup>TH</sup> IN PRESCOTT, JUNE 14<sup>TH</sup> IN VAIL  
WATCH THE ADE WEBSITE FOR REGISTRATION INFORMATION**



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### More Inclusion



Students with disabilities must now be considered for participation in sports programs at all educational levels. The U.S. Department of Education directs all public schools to ensure that disabled students have an opportunity to participate in all extracurricular athletics, and when that's not possible they should provide equal alternative options. One deaf student in Dallas is having success on his school's football team.

To facilitate his inclusion his coach has made minor adjustments to aid in team coordination, but otherwise feels he's a good fit. The student's mother is encouraged by how it's helped her child's development and increased his independence. She feels he learns important life lessons in this competitive environment. Read the full story at the link below:

<http://www.dallasnews.com/sports/high-schools/headlines/20130210-inside-the-life-of-a-deaf-dallas-high-school-football-player-is-it-harder.ece>



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